

Chapter 177

Ava felt the difference in the air when she stepped into the First-Year block the following day. It wasn't just the rush in her body from Mr. Patrick's magic still surging inside her or the way the students avoided her and lowered their gazes.

It wasn't even because she could sense the dark void she usually felt around Claire and her friends was muted.

It was because she could feel the Head of the Council as if he was right next to her. All around her. Watching her. She could feel the prickling all over her body, and unease filled her body.

She kept her mind purposefully blank as she walked into her Cooking class because she knew Mr. Patrick's magic was nowhere near as strong as Mr. Hansson's. Too much was riding on her ability to shield.

It wasn't until she'd sat down in her usual spot next to the window that she realized the whole class had stopped talking, and the teacher stood with her eyes lowered at the front of the room. And then the things she was trying to forget pushed back to the front of her mind.

How many had she killed?

She looked down at her hands in her lap and balled them into fists. Concentrating on what she had to do later that morning was easier than thinking of the devastation she had caused in training.

“Um Miss Morgan... Alpha...”

She lifted her gaze to the teacher. Alpha?

“I think you have the wrong class,” she whispered.

She whispered, but Ava heard her loudly and clearly. She had woken up that morning to the sounds of birds chirping as if they were right next to her ear and her mate’s steady heartbeat. She’d also heard the rest of the household and the guards outside, who stood like statues.

The noise had been horrendous, but it switched off like someone had pressed an “off” button.

Because her murderous wolf was defective.

When the teacher’s words penetrated her brain, she pulled her tablet out of her bag and checked her schedule. She’d left it in her locker again, but found it on the bed with another freshly pressed uniform after her shower, courtesy of Samantha and Julie.

She didn’t think she had her schedule wrong. She hated the classes, but she memorized her schedule during the first week because there wasn’t

much she was expected to learn. There were no new changes when she and Zeke checked for their meeting with Mr. Hansson.

“No, my timetable is the same,” she said.

The teacher cleared her throat and whispered again, “Please check again. This is a class for Omegas.”

She hadn’t thought of that. Her wolf was clearly not an Omega, but at the same time, ‘the Council didn’t make mistakes’. How were they going to explain this one?

“I’m sorry, ma’am. I can’t leave until I’m told to. I don’t have any notices.”

The teacher just nodded but remained standing. She was so scared of her. She could sense the fear, taste it in the air as if it were a tangible thing. She’d been told a bit of fear was good, but she didn’t like this. The fear was coming from all of them and starting to suffocate her.

“I’ll go to the dean’s office,” she said as she stood and put her things back into her bag.

“Thank you,” the teacher said.

Would all her classes be like this? At least they weren’t crippled by their fear, so whatever spell had been put on them at the assembly was no longer holding them

She left the classroom and felt their relief that she was gone. She'd never wanted to be friends with any of them anyway, but it was safe to as that ship had sailed. No one would want to be next to her now, never mind being friends. She leaned back against the door and sighed. Where was she supposed to go now?

“Good morning, my beautiful enigma.”

Councilor Andrei appeared in front of her as he had done the other day. He had a smile on his handsome face and wasn't trying to mask his allure. She felt the pull of his power even with the magical protection she had, but the difference was she wasn't even slightly affected.

She lowered her gaze and mumbled, “Good morning, Councilor Dalca.”

“I told you to call me Andrei,” he said as he came closer. “You have to get used to it. Ava.”

“The rules say I can't call you that, and you want me to follow the rules.”

“That would be true if you were an Omega or even a Beta,” the vampire said.

She lifted her gaze and found him too close to her again. The solid wood of the door behind her didn't allow her to step back as she looked up into his eyes.

“Look at you.” the vampire whispered. “You can look into my eyes without any fear. You're resisting me, and I don't even think you realize

you're doing it. The rules are for the sheep. Ava. They weren't meant for people like you or your mate."

"The sheep?"

Was that what he called all the students here? The rules had been hammered into all of them from birth at the Council's insistence, but they thought of them as mindless sheep?

"Don't get upset with me," the vampire said, grinning. "People who follow the rules without question can never be leaders."

"They do it to stay alive," she hissed.

"Ah, I see. You're still upset about the Omega," the vampire said. "She was never your friend. Ava. And she was a useless coward who would bring no value to her pack. You said it yourself."

Her chest squeezed, and she lowered her gaze. She had said that, but that didn't mean she wanted Emily dead.

"Look at me, Ava."

She did as she was told. The vampire was still smiling.

"There is no submissive bone in your body. It makes me wonder how you got that mark in the first place when your wolf clearly does not like your mate.

Her chest squeezed again as she self-consciously tugged at the collar of her shirt.

“I’m old enough that things never surprise me anymore, but you are just full of mysteries that I’m dying to unravel,” the vampire said.

“You offered to come get her, Andrei, not play with her.”

The witch sounded unimpressed as her voice came from somewhere behind the vampire. Still, Andrei remained where he was, not caging her in but close enough that she felt trapped.

“Aren’t you curious, too, Iulia,” Andrei mused without breaking eye contact.

“Your curiosity will get us into trouble. Come, Andrei.”

The vampire sighed and then stepped back from her personal space, allowing her to breathe again. But Iulia’s words stuck in her head. Did they have rules to follow, too? Clearly, the Head of Council was their boss, but was it not a democracy? Did he have absolute control? Like a dictator?

“Come, little one. We will have to continue this another time.”

She watched him link his arm with Iulia’s and smile at her as they walked ahead.

“Where are we going?” she asked.

Iulia turned back and shifted her dazzling smile to her.

“To start the rest of your life, Ava.”